

When we headed to the polls for this week's New Jersey primary elections, most of us took for granted that our right to vote would be protected and that our votes would be counted. But the truth is that federal law does too little to guarantee these rights.

Last month, I joined Reps. Jim Clyburn, John Lewis, Steny Hoyer, Judy Chu, and others to introduce the Voter Empowerment Act (VEA), a comprehensive voting rights bill that aims to protect the integrity of our democracy. It combines key components of my past voting rights legislation with new initiatives to improve access to the ballot box, ensure the integrity of the election process, and protect the accountability of the results.

VEA includes provisions that I wrote to require voter-verified paper ballots while preserving voter privacy, to allow independent verification of vote totals, and to prohibit knowingly misleading any voter in order to prevent him or her from voting. It also improves access to the ballot by modernizing the voter registration system, assisting people with disabilities, banning discriminatory practices, and making voting more convenient by allowing voters to cast their vote before Election Day.

More than a century ago, the Supreme Court described the right to vote as the most fundamental right in a democracy, because it is "preservative of all rights." In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson said that "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice." I will continue to work to protect this most fundamental of rights.

VEA has been referred to several House committees, including the committees on Judiciary and Administration, for further consideration.

24 Days to Prevent Student Loan Rates from Doubling

Last month, I wrote to you that the House had only [57 days](#) to prevent America's student loan interest rates from doubling to 6.8 percent. Now, only 24 days remain. If Congress fails to act, 143,892 New Jersey students will face an additional \$115 million in borrowing costs over the next year alone.

Unfortunately, the Tea Party majority in the House has not and does not plan to take action to prevent these rate hikes. The news in the Senate is also grim: although a majority of senators voted in late May to stop the rate hike, Republicans filibustered the bill, preventing it from moving forward.

Time is running short. I wrote to the Majority Leader on Wednesday to urge him to bring responsible legislation to the floor to prevent the rate hike. We must not delay any longer.

Town Hall Meetings in South River and Princeton Township On Saturday

This Saturday, I'll be hosting two town hall meetings to hear directly from you about issues affecting you and our community, such as job creation, health care, education, hometown security, and any other issues that you want to raise. I hope to see you there!

Saturday, June 9, 2012

10:00 a.m.

South River Council Chambers
61 Main Street
South River, New Jersey

1:00 p.m.

Main Meeting Room
Princeton Township Municipal Complex
400 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey

Sincerely,

Rush Holt

Member of Congress